

**1 Appendix A—ASHP Statement on Pharmacy
2 Services to the Emergency Department**

3 Position

4 The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP)
5 believes every hospital pharmacy department should provide its
6 emergency department (ED) with the pharmacy services that are
7 necessary for safe and effective patient care. Although the nature of
8 these services will vary with each institution’s needs and resources,
9 the pharmacist’s role may include

- 10 • Working with emergency physicians, emergency nurses, and other
11 health care professionals to develop and monitor medication-use
12 systems that promote safe and effective medication use in the ED,
13 especially for high-risk patients and procedures,
- 14 • Collaborating with emergency physicians, emergency nurses,
15 and other health care professionals to promote medication use in
16 the ED that is evidence based and aligned with national quality
17 indicators,
- 18 • Participating in the selection, implementation, and monitoring
19 of technology utilized in the medication-use process,
- 20 • Providing direct patient care as part of the interdisciplinary emer-
21 gency care team,
- 22 • Participating in or leading emergency-preparedness efforts and
23 quality-improvement initiatives,
- 24 • Educating patients, caregivers, and health care professionals about
25 safe and effective medication use, and
- 26 • Conducting or participating in ED-based research.

27 ASHP supports the expansion of pharmacy education and post-
28 graduate residency training to include an emphasis on emergency
29 care.

30 The purposes of this statement are to promote understanding of
31 the pharmacist’s contributions to the care of patients in the ED and
32 to suggest future roles for pharmacists in providing that care.

33 Background

34 EDs across the nation treat approximately 114 million patients
35 annually.¹ EDs are overcrowded because of a high percentage of
36 uninsured patients, increased patient volume, increased complex-
37 ity of patients presenting to the ED, and a hospital bed shortage
38 that frequently results in the boarding of inpatients in the ED. The
39 combination of interruptions, intense pressure, and a fast-paced
40 environment can lead to medication errors and fewer error intercep-
41 tions.¹ The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has estimated that as many
42 as 98,000 people die each year as a result of medical errors and that
43 adverse drug events (ADEs) occurred in 3.7% of hospitalizations.²
44 Hafner et al.³ reported a similar frequency of ADEs in the ED. Chin
45 and colleagues⁴ found that 3.6% of patients received an inappropriate
46 medication in the ED and 5.6% were prescribed an inappropriate
47 medication at discharge.

48 Pharmacy services in the ED have been documented since the
49 1970s.⁵⁻⁸ These services initially focused on inventory control, cost
50 containment, and participation on resuscitation teams but have
51 since expanded to include clinical pharmacy services.⁹ The effec-
52 tiveness of clinical pharmacy services has been well documented
53 in other settings. The participation of pharmacists in intensive
54 care units and on internal medicine teams has improved patient
55 outcomes by reducing preventable ADEs by 66% and 78%, respec-
56 tively.¹⁰⁻¹² Similar effectiveness with pharmacist participation on
57 emergency medicine teams has also been documented.¹³ Despite
58 this evidence, the 2005 ASHP national survey found that only 3.5%
59 of the hospitals surveyed had a pharmacist assigned to the ED for
60 any period of time, and only 5% had a formal policy requiring
61 that pharmacists review and approve medication orders before
62 administration in EDs.¹⁴

63 Pharmacy Services to the ED

64 All health care professionals share a commitment to and respon-
65 sibility for providing safe and effective patient care. These shared
66 objectives provide strong incentives for collaboration. Pharmacists
67 and other health care professionals can collaborate in developing and
68 monitoring medication-use systems that promote safe and effective
69 medication use in the ED, including medication use in high-risk ED

patients and procedures. Working together, pharmacists and other
health care professionals can (1) ensure that medication use in
the ED is evidence based, cost-effective, and adherent to national
guidelines, (2) develop and implement emergency-preparedness
plans and quality-improvement efforts, and (3) in many cases,
foster the institution’s education and research initiatives. The de-
partment of pharmacy should assume a leadership role in ensuring
these collaborations.

When making decisions regarding pharmacy services to the ED,
hospital leadership should consider the ED’s need for medication
therapy management services, medication-allergy assessment and
clarification, medication-interaction assessment, reporting of and
intervention on medication errors and ADEs, timely provision of
drug information, and participation in formulary decision-making.
Institutions should also keep in mind the Joint Commission’s
pharmacist first-review requirement¹⁵ and National Patient Safety
Goals¹⁶; the hospital’s quality indicators related to medication se-
lection, timing, and delivery; the potential effects of patient flow
and technology on medication safety in the ED; and contributions
pharmacists can make to continuity of care from ED admission
through hospital discharge.

Patient care. The IOM report *Hospital-Based Emergency Care: At
the Breaking Point* recommends the inclusion of clinical pharmacists
on the ED care team to ensure patients’ medication needs are appro-
priately met, lead system changes to reduce or eliminate medication
errors, and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of medication therapy for
the patient and hospital.¹ As part of the interdisciplinary ED care
team, pharmacists can provide care to critically ill patients by

- Participating in resuscitation efforts,
- Providing consultative services that foster appropriate evidence-
based medication selection,
- Providing consultation on patient-specific medication dosage and
dosage adjustments,
- Providing drug information consultation to emergency physicians,
emergency nurses, and other clinicians,
- Monitoring for patient allergies and drug interactions,
- Monitoring patient therapeutic responses (including laboratory
values),
- Continuously assessing for and managing adverse drug reactions,
and
- Gathering or reviewing medication histories and reconciling
patients’ medications.

In addition to the above, pharmacists can provide care to ambula-
tory patients in the ED by

- Modifying medication regimens based on collaborative-practice
agreements for management of specific patient populations who
return to ED;
- Providing vaccination screening, referral, and administration;
- Offering patient and caregiver education, including discharge
counseling and follow-up; and
- Providing information on obtaining medications through patient
assistance programs, care funds, and samples.

The boarding of patients in the ED until an inpatient bed becomes
available poses challenges for patients, caregivers, and health care
professionals. The department of pharmacy should work with the
health care professionals involved in the care of these patients to
provide a seamless medication-use process.

Emergency-preparedness planning. ASHP believes that all
hospital and health-system pharmacists must assertively exercise
their responsibilities to prepare for and respond to disasters.¹⁷ ASHP
has insisted that emergency response planners at the federal, re-
gional, state, and local levels call upon pharmacists to participate in
the full range of planning issues related to pharmaceuticals. Hospital
emergency preparedness plans, including ED components, must be
developed with the assistance of departments of pharmacy. Pharma-
cists should play a pivotal role in emergency preparedness planning
and as a member of the health care team that provides care to victims.
Because treatment of disaster victims almost always involves the
use of pharmacologic agents, ensuring the efficacy and safety of the
medication-use process is a natural role for pharmacists.^{18,19}

1 **Quality-improvement initiatives.** The department of pharmacy can collaborate with other health care professionals on a variety of quality-improvement initiatives in the ED, including

- 4 • Guiding the development of evidence-based treatment protocols, algorithms, and clinical pathways that are congruent with nationally accepted practice guidelines and quality indicators,
- 6 • Assisting in the development, implementation, and assessment of various technologies used throughout the ED medication-use process,
- 8 • Conducting failure mode and effects analysis and root-cause analysis on error-prone aspects of the medication-use process,
- 10 • Participating in ED-based and hospitalwide committees (e.g., pharmacy and therapeutics, infection control, disaster) whose decisions affect medication use in the ED,
- 12 • Maintaining compliance with standards of national accrediting bodies, such as the Joint Commission, and
- 14 • Assisting in surveillance and reporting of adverse drug reactions.

18 **Education.** The pharmacy department should support the pharmacist's role in providing education and information to health care professionals, patients, and the public in ED service areas. Specific activities could include

- 22 • Conducting educational forums for health care professionals and students on topics such as emergency preparedness, disaster management, poisoning prevention and treatment, immunizations, and use of medications in the ED and emergency situations,
- 24 • Providing health literacy-sensitive education to patients and caregivers regarding medication use, disease state management, and prevention strategies, and
- 26 • Offering ED-based educational opportunities to pharmacy students and residents.

31 The ED offers an enormous number of services, activities, and opportunities to train future pharmacists in all aspects of the medication-use process. Students and residents could participate in longitudinal experiences in ED-based services such as clinics, community services (e.g., health fairs), and satellite pharmacies, studying topics as varied as cultural follow-up, ADE monitoring and reporting, or toxicology services. Introductory experiences could focus on student training on specific skills or competencies, such as taking medication histories, medication reconciliation, or discharge counseling. Residency training of pharmacists in emergency care would provide more rewarding educational experiences, foster pharmacist involvement in emergency medicine research, and ultimately improve the quality of patient care. Such residencies should meet ASHP-accredited residency quality standards.²⁰ Achievement of the goals, objectives, and expected outcomes of such training would be supported by around-the-clock or on-call clinical pharmacist services in the ED.

47 **ED-based research.** Research on and publications about ED pharmacy, though plentiful, usually focus on specific clinical settings, such as toxicology, drug interactions, and infectious disease epidemiology. The literature lacks a broad representation of the varied scope and range of ED pharmacy practices. ASHP believes that there should be more research on and publications regarding medication use in the ED and ED-based pharmacy activities. Studies that generate data on therapeutic, safety, humanistic, and economic outcomes of pharmacist-mediated process changes are urgently needed.

56 **Professional Development of Pharmacists in Emergency Care**

58 ASHP believes there should be an increase in the number of ED-based training opportunities for pharmacists, pharmacy students, and residents. Schools and colleges of pharmacy are encouraged to provide ED-based educational opportunities for students. Hospitals and health systems are encouraged to support ED-based educational programs that produce experts in the field. Postgraduate training of pharmacists will provide a pipeline of clinicians, educators, leaders, and scientists who are expert in and committed to quality emergency care.

Conclusion

Every pharmacy department should provide the ED with the pharmacy services required to ensure safe and effective patient care. These services must be tailored to match each institution's needs and resources, so pharmacy departments must decide the best way to safely provide medications to their ED patients. ASHP supports the expansion of pharmacy education and postgraduate residency training to include emphasis on emergency care in order to develop an adequate supply of pharmacists trained to deliver these essential pharmacy services.

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Approved by the ASHP Board of Directors on September 28, 2007. Approval by the ASHP House of Delegates is pending. Developed through the ASHP Council on Pharmacy Practice.

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